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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 71/NO. 1 JANUARY 8, 2007

INSIDE

'Capitalists dug our graves in vain: Marxism remains alive'

'New International' magazine presented in Caracas

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Workers protest raids of packing plants

Oppose arrests of 1,300, deportations



Relatives and supporters of workers arrested in raid at Swift meatpacking plant in Greeley, Colorado, face off with immigration agents December 12 outside factory.

BY FRANK FORRESTAL AND HELEN MEYERS

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa, December 20—Protests, vigils, and other meetings have taken place across the Midwest in response to the December 12 raids of six Swift meatpacking plants in six states. Events have taken place in Greeley, Durango, and Denver, Colorado; Des Moines, Marshalltown, and Sioux City, Iowa; Omaha and Grand Island, Nebraska; and Austin, St. Paul, and Worthington, Minnesota.

Ninety workers were arrested at the Swift plant here, which employs about 1,800 workers in a town of 26,000. Altogether 1,282 workers were arrested, in the largest-ever immigration sweep at a single company.

The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reported that

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'Justice for Sean Bell!' say 10,000 at New York march

BY EMILY PAUL AND OLYMPIA NEWTON

NEW YORK, December 16—Chanting "No justice, no peace!" and counting to 50, some 10,000 people marched down Manhattan's Fifth Avenue today to protest the November 26 killing of Sean Bell by New York cops. Bell, 23, was gunned down in a hail of 50 bullets as he and two friends—Joseph Guzman, 31, and Trent Benefield, 23—sat in Bell's car outside a nightclub in Jamaica, Queens.

Benefield, who was shot three times, led the march from his wheelchair, along with Nicole Paultre, Bell's fiancée who was supposed to marry the young African-American worker the day he was killed.

Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant brutally beaten and sodomized by New York City cops in 1997; Rev. Alfred Sharpton, a Democratic Party politician; and Congressman Charles Rangel also walked at the front of the procession.

The march stretched five lanes wide over 10 city blocks. It included contingents from the United Federation of Teachers, American Postal Workers

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Militant/Robin Mace

10,000 people, in their majority Black, march on Manhattan's Fifth Ave. December 16 to protest cop brutality.

U.S. rulers prepare to send up to 50,000 additional troops to Iraq

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

December 20—One of the main options the U.S. rulers are considering to establish a stable client regime in Iraq is a "temporary surge" of their troops there by up to 50,000 soldiers "to pacify Baghdad." The proposal has bipartisan support.

The debate among capitalist politicians is now centering on the size and length of deployment of such a force.

Incoming Senate majority leader Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada, made clear in a December 17 interview on ABC's television program *This Week with George Stephanopoulos* that he would back the president's call for more troops. "If it's for a surge, that is, for two or three months and it's part of a program to get us out of there… then, sure I'll go along with it," he said.

Sen. Hillary Clinton, a Democrat from New York who is a leading contender for her party's presidential nomination in the 2008 elections, said she was skeptical

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Record number of workers killed at construction sites in New York

BY RÓGER CALERO AND MAURA DELUCA

NEW YORK, December 18—Fatal construction accidents have reached a record high in this city. Twenty-nine construction workers died between Sept. 30, 2005, and last September.

This represents a 61 percent increase in construction-related deaths compared to the same period the previous year. Seventeen of the 29 workers were killed in falls, compared to nine out of a total of 18 deaths in 2005.

The killings of workers are taking place in the midst of a construction boom here, as contractors, large and small, are pushing to meet deadlines and cut costs at the workers' expense.

In 2005, $18.8 billion was spent on construction in New York City. The figure is expected to reach $20.8 billion in 2006, according to the New York Building Congress, a conglomerate of construction firms and related businesses. Much

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Also Inside:

Canada parliament: 'Quebec a nation in united country'

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—The Canadian Parliament took an unexpected step November 27 by overwhelmingly adopting the following motion introduced a few days earlier by Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper: "That this House recognizes that the Quebecois form a nation within a united Canada." The vote was 266 to 16. All parties, including the Liberals and New Democratic Party (NDP), supported the

NEWS ANALYSIS

motion. One independent member of parliament and 15 Liberal MPs voted against.

The Bloc Quebecois (BQ), a bourgeois nationalist party based in Quebec that calls for Quebec sovereignty, had earlier introduced a motion that simply recognized Quebec as a nation. Harper added the phrase "within a united Canada."

At first the BQ said it would oppose Harper's motion but soon decided to support it. "It is a fact, we are in Canada," said BQ leader Gilles Duceppe. "It is always better, when we are fighting for a sovereign Quebec, that Canada recognizes that Quebeckers are a nation…. When we will be facing the international level with other countries, even Canada is recognizing that we constitute a nation. That is good for us."

Tory leaders, however, were quick to explain the legal significance of this motion—none. "There is no legal consequence to this recognition," said Harper's Quebec lieutenant, Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon, adding that the party has no intention of giving it any constitutional meaning.

At the same time, the motion's adoption is a registration of the gains won by the Quebecois in decades of fighting to determine their own future as a nation. It shows that the Quebec question remains at the center of national politics in Canada.

None of the capitalist parties in parliament, including the BQ, recognize that Quebec is an *oppressed* nation within Canada whose aspirations for sovereignty have been suppressed, sometimes violently, and that the Quebecois have faced more than a century and a half of discrimination because they speak French. This has meant lower incomes, inferior educational and health services, and lower life expectancy for them.

Quebec's workers and farmers have been at the forefront of mass struggles to resist national oppression and more and more of them have come to support independence for Quebec. At the same time, their fight has won them respect from trade unions and working people in the rest of Canada.

"Although no major actions defending Quebec's national rights have taken place since the 1995 Quebec referendum, this grudging recognition of their national status by Canada's rulers reflects an advance in the debate on Quebec's national rights," said Joseph Young, Communist League candidate for mayor in the recent municipal elections in Toronto.

"The systematic denial of the national rights of Quebecois by Canada's rulers is still the source of the deepest division among working people in this country," stated Young. "Supporting Quebec independence is key to building working-class unity and to a common struggle to establish a workers and farmers government in Ottawa."

None of the main parties in Canada's parliament—Conservative, Liberal, or NDP—support Quebec's right to national self-determination. These same parties backed the adoption in 2000 of the Clarity Act, which gives Ottawa the right to decide if any future referendum in Quebec meets its conditions for legitimacy.

Adopting the latest motion on "Quebec as a nation" is a result of maneuvers by capitalist politicians and parties.

The federal Liberal Party had been gearing for months for a leadership election in early December. Its Quebec wing adopted a motion this fall calling on the party to recognize Quebec as a nation within Canada. In a bid to win backing from delegates in Quebec, Liberal front-running candidate Michael Ignatieff seized on the motion, declaring his support, a move a number of Liberal politicians opposed.

To embarrass the divided Liberals, the BQ introduced its motion in federal parliament. Harper, leading a minority government that might have to face voters again soon, including in Quebec, introduced his own revision to the BQ motion, which passed.

Ignatieff's act to bring the whole question back into the middle of national politics played the major role in his defeat at the Liberal convention December 2. Stéphane Dion, who is from Quebec and a hard-line supporter of Canadian unity, won the vote on the fourth ballot. He had the endorsement of the *Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's two main national dailies. Dion was the minister in the government of Jean Chrétien responsible for the Clarity Act.

The *Globe and Mail* summed up the Christmas wish for many among the rulers in Canada in an editorial in its November 28 issue. "What is important now is that Canada not try to 'officialize' the recognition, to use—for what we hope is the last time—that horrible crowbar of a word with which the Liberal Party's Quebec wing, supported by Mr. Ignatieff, seeks to pry open this country's very own Pandora's box," it said.

Tufts University meeting discusses 'Cuba Today'



Militant/Betsy Farley

BOSTON—More than 100 students, faculty, and guests attended a one-day symposium December 1 at Tufts University near Boston on "Cuba Today: Transitions, Innovations and Transformations." Above, on platform, are (from left) students Elizabeth Morrow, Lauren Boccardi, Melissa Fuller, and Britton Schwartz. The panelists discussed strides towards women's equality since workers and farmers took political power in 1959, how the Cuban people and their government have resisted Washington's economic war, and other gains of the Cuban Revolution.

—BETSY FARLEY

'Militant' holiday schedule

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Nepal Maoists to join bourgeois coalition gov't

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Nepal's seven-party governing coalition and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) announced December 16 they had approved a draft constitution for an "interim" government. The document is a step toward implementing a peace accord signed a month earlier, in which the Maoists agreed to end their decade-long guerrilla war and join the government.

The accord is the result of months of negotiations following an explosion of mass demonstrations last April that forced King Gyanendra to give up absolute rule and return governmental authority to a parliament he dissolved four years ago.

The draft constitution would maintain the crown but strip the king of all executive powers and vest them in the prime minister. The interim government would remain until a constituent assembly is elected sometime in 2007. The assembly would then approve a constitution and decide whether to continue, curtail, or abolish the monarchy. Gyanendra has become deeply unpopular since he seized all governmental power last year, proceeding to rule as a dictator for 15 months.

As part of the November 21 accord, the CPN (M) agreed to confine its guerrillas to United Nations–supervised camps and lock up their weapons. The army is likewise supposed to be confined to its barracks and have an equal number of its weapons stored. Thousands of guerrillas are already stationed in seven main designated areas under UN patrol.

"Once the [UN] monitoring of arms is complete, the Maoists will join the government," said Minendra Rijal, a leader of the ruling coalition. The earliest that could happen is January, after a UN monitoring group issues a report.

The peace accord establishes a "truth and reconciliation commission," according to the *New York Times.* The commission is supposed to investigate human rights violations by the government army and the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA). Baburam Bhattarai, second in command of the CPN (M), said that while he favored punishing army officials responsible for the worst offenses, "We have to go for reconciliation, for the sake of peace."

In April Nepal was shaken by mass demonstrations and a general strike. Tens of thousands poured into the streets of Kathmandu, the capital, and other cities, with chants such as "Hang Gyanendra" and "We want a republic, we don't want the king anymore." Faced with the prospect of being toppled, Gyanendra reinstated parliament. The opposition immediately called off the demonstrations and chose Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress Party as prime minister.

Nepal, sandwiched between China and India, is an agricultural nation of 28 million inhabitants in the mountainous Himalayan region. One of least developed capitalist countries in the world, Nepal is marked by semifeudal relations in the countryside and a Hindu-based caste system, with millions subject to institutionalized discrimination as *dalits* ("untouchables").

Popular struggles against the monarchy have wrested concessions from the regime. Mass protests in 1990 led King Birendra to accept a new constitution and parliamentary elections. The main parties in parliament have included the Nepali Congress Party and Stalinist groups such as the Communist Party of Nepal and what is now the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

The CPN (M), which politically looks to the former Chinese regime headed by Mao Zedong, has pursued a course of becoming part of a bourgeois government in alliance with a "progressive" wing of the capitalist class. To further this goal, in the mid-1990s it went underground and launched a rural guerrilla campaign.

The People's Liberation Army, with up to 15,000 fighters and thousands of militia members, now controls large parts of the countryside. The Nepalese army and police have waged a bloody counterinsurgency campaign, with more than 13,000 people killed, mostly in the countryside.

"This ends the 11 years of civil war in our country," declared CPN (M) chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal—commonly known as Prachanda—at the November 21 signing of the peace agreement. Speaking at a gathering of diplomats and politicians, he stated, "This moment marks the end of the 238-year-old feudal system."

Under the accord, the Maoists are to have ministers in the cabinet and 73 representatives in a 209-deputy parliament, a few less than the Congress Party and the same number as the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), another Stalinist faction.



AP/Tamal Roy

Members of People's Liberation Army, the guerrilla arm of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), store their arms at a UN-monitored depot in Kamlajhora, Nepal, November 18.

Interviewed by the Italian magazine *L'espresso* in November, Prachanda said his party's goals were to abolish the monarchy, form a coalition government, and "radically democratize the state structure."

"We will apply mixed economics to this country… and we will welcome foreign investors, using capital from abroad for the well-being of Nepal," he said. "In 20 years we could be similar to Switzerland. This is my goal for Nepal."

In a June interview that appeared in the online Nepalese news publication *eKantipur.com*, Prachanda stated, "We are clear that there will be no development in Nepal unless the capitalists can make some profit." He said his party asked only that they invest their profits in Nepal and not take them out of the country.

The Nepalese Maoists' decision to end their guerrilla campaign and join the government has embarrassed some of their international supporters, who portrayed the course of their co-thinkers in Nepal as an example of an advancing revolution. Expressing puzzlement, an article in the December 10 issue of *Revolution*, the newspaper of the U.S. Revolutionary Communist Party, said, "We need to understand this current agreement more fully."

U.S. rulers prepare to send more troops to Iraq

Continued from front page

about Reid's proposal. "I am not in favor of doing that unless it's part of a larger plan," she said, reported the Associated Press.

Sen. John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, has been calling for adding 35,000 troops. In December he led a congressional delegation to meet with U.S. military brass in Iraq.

The discussion in Washington takes place in the midst of intensified bloodletting in Iraq fueled by bourgeois factions vying for a greater share of power. In its quarterly report to Congress released December 18, the Pentagon said attacks on U.S.-led and Iraqi government forces have averaged almost 960 a week between early August and early November, a record high.

Titled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," the document notes that 54 percent of all attacks occurred in only two of Iraq's 18 provinces, Baghdad and Anbar. "Although 68 percent of those attacks were directed at coalition forces, Iraqis suffered most of the casualties," said the American Forces Press Service.

A December 17 document from the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute (AEI) has attracted attention in ruling-class circles. "Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq" is authored by AEI military expert Frederick Kagan and retired General Jack Keane, the former vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army.

"Last Monday Bush was, at last, briefed on an actual plan for victory in Iraq, one that is likely to be implemented," wrote Fred Barnes in the December 25 *Weekly Standard,* a conservative magazine. The article, which Barnes wrote "for the editors," is headlined, "'We're going to win': The president finally has a plan for victory."

Bush announced December 20 his intention to increase the size of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, pointing out that the Iraq war will require "additional sacrifices" in 2007. "We're not succeeding nearly as fast as I wanted," he said at a White House news conference.

"The strategy of relying on a political process to eliminate the insurgency has failed," writes Kagan in a summary of the AEI document. The report calls for 50,000 troops to be sent to Iraq, in addition to the 140,000 U.S. military personnel currently on the ground there.

"We must send more American combat forces into Iraq and especially into Baghdad," writes Kagan. "A surge of seven Army brigades and Marine regiments to support clear-and-hold operations starting in the Spring of 2007 is necessary, possible, and will be sufficient." The report projects boosting combat troops inside Baghdad from the current 17,500 to 35,000 by March, and to 42,000 by September.

"The initial mission would be to secure and hold the mixed Baghdad neighborhoods of Shia and Sunni residents where most of the violence occurs," said the *Weekly Standard*, describing the plan outlined in the AEI report. "Earlier efforts had cleared many of those sections of the city without holding them. After which, the mass killings resumed. Once neighborhoods are cleared, American and Iraqi troops in this plan would remain behind, living day-to-day among the population." Similar steps would then be taken to "pacify" the Anbar province, where Sunnis are the majority.

—CALENDAR—

FLORIDA

Miami

Classes on *The Second Declaration of Havana*. Sun., Dec. 31, 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. *8365 NE Second Ave., Suite 206. Tel: (305) 756-4436.*

Celebrate the Political Life of Connie Harris

Speakers: **Jack Barnes**, National Secretary, Socialist Workers Party in the U.S.; **Peter Clifford**, Central Committee, Communist League in the U.K.; **Jo O'Brien**, member of the organizing committee for the first national women's liberation conference in the U.K. Cochairs: **Jonathan Silberman** and **Mary-Alice Waters**

Saturday, January 13
3 p.m. reception, 4 p.m. meeting
Dragons Hall, 17 Stukeley St., London

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Protest ICE Raids! Legalize All Immigrants Now! Speaker: Dean Hazelwood, recently returned from Greeley, Colorado, scene of immigration raids. Fri., Dec. 29. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. *4229 S. Central Ave. Tel.: (323) 233-9372.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Women and the Cuban Revolution. Video showing followed by a discussion. Sat., Jan. 6. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. *306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor (use north set of elevators). Tel.: (212) 629-6649.*

TEXAS

Houston

Celebrate the Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Video showing on women and the Cuban Revolution followed by a party. Fri., Dec. 29, 7:30 p.m. *4800 W 34th St. Tel.: (713) 869-6550.*

Record deaths at N.Y. construction sites

Continued from front page
of the boom is directed toward building luxury condominiums and apartments sold at prices out of reach for most working people.

Falls from hanging scaffolds and high floors, as well as from scaffolding collapses, are a major source of the deaths.

Klever Jara, 25, originally from Ecuador, is one of the workers killed on the job recently. He fell from 18 stories high when he was walking along a building ledge connecting two scaffolds on November 1. According to press reports, Jara was wearing a harness at the time of the accident, but he had unclipped it to move between the two scaffolds.

Manno Oh, a bridge painter, fell to his death October 23 from the Queensboro Bridge when the scaffold he was on dipped as he was trying to fix it. Oh was not then wearing his harness, according to reports by CBS TV.

Another worker died the same day after a gust of wind knocked him off the scaffold as he was switching harnesses.

"They are killing us," Peter Rivera, 20, who works at a construction site in the Chelsea area in Lower Manhattan, told the *Militant* in a December 12 interview. "They have a deadline and they are pushing us to finish the job so fast."

The day after Jara's death, city officials announced the formation of a 28-member panel "to develop a policy for safety enforcement, training, and oversight."

Spokespeople for City Hall and builders' associations have blamed the spike in deaths on the job on increased "illegal construction activity"; shortage of resources for safety enforcement agencies; and paltry penalties for violations.

According to Jonathan Bennett, public affairs director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, there are a total of eight city inspectors for scaffolding and fewer than three working under the federal Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA).

"We don't want this to become a union, nonunion question," said Lou Coletti, president of the Building Trades Employers' Association, which represents employers of union workers. On National Public Radio's Brian Lehrer show December 15, Coletti asserted, "What is necessary is a higher level of standards for smaller contractors."

However, 81 percent of the deaths have occurred at nonunion construction sites.

"Inspectors came about a week ago, and we have not seen them since," Stanley Strugala, 45, a scaffolding builder, said. Strugala has worked both in union and nonunion sites over 25 years. "They want to save themselves a few thousand dollars, and they hire inexperienced immigrant guys, and they take advantage of them," he said, referring to the bosses. Most of the workers who died at construction sites last year were immigrants.

Strugala said building regulations require that the rigger holding the scaffold be checked every day prior to starting work, and that a monitor be available on site at all times. But, he added, "with the pressure to finish the job, you get rushed, and they want you in and out quick."

Marco Chauca, a member of Drywall Tapers Union Local 1974, said many workers feel pressure to remove their harness temporarily because it gets in the way of doing the job fast. "There is always pressure to work faster," said Chauca. "This is a production job, it is like factory work. If you don't make the quota, they'll fire you."

At another site in Manhattan, George Deblasio, 18, member of Laborers Union Local 78, said the bosses "make safety adjustments for the pedestrians below. If you look up there, there's a net, but you can tell it won't do much if any of us fall."

Luis Bello, who works at a construction site in Riverdale, Bronx, said competition for jobs and the bosses' productivity drive are to blame for the deaths and injuries on the job. "The union would help if it pressed for better conditions," he said.

"Over here there is a little more control because there is a union," said Chauca. A union member for 12 years now, he used to work on nonunion demolition jobs as a day laborer earlier. "There you saw a lot of accidents," he said.

Nadia Molina, director of the Workplace Project in Long Island, told National Public Radio that there is "a need among day laborers to unionize construction workers. When there is a union there is a greater degree of protection regardless of the workers' immigration status."


Militant/Róger Calero

One of many construction sites in Chelsea, Lower Manhattan, December 19.

Relatives of deceased Sago miners angry at state report

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH—Relatives of miners killed in the Jan. 2, 2006, explosion at the Sago Mine in West Virginia are angry about the official state report on the blast and how it was released.

"Ron Wooten, all he did was bring the report, dump it in our laps, and he was going to leave it at that," said Pam Campbell, sister-in-law of Sago miner Marty Bennett, according to the December 15 *Charleston Gazette*.

Bennett was one of 12 miners to die at Sago. One of these miners died from the impact of the explosion and 11 from carbon monoxide poisoning after being trapped underground for more than 40 hours.

Wooten, a former Consol Energy boss, is the director of West Virginia's Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training.

Campbell said she was also upset at Wooten's response to a question about what would happen if another lightning storm occurred near an underground mine with newly constructed seals. "I wouldn't want to be in there," Wooten reportedly said.

Due to the reaction of the miners' families, West Virginia's governor, Joseph Manchin, cancelled a press conference where the report was to be officially announced December 11 and withdrew the report after it had already been made public. The report said the explosion was caused by lightning—the same claim the mine's owner, the International Coal Group (ICG), has put forward. ICG has clung to the lightning-strike theory to counter revelations about the rampant safety violations in this nonunion mine that surfaced after the disaster.

The Sago Mine had been cited by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) 273 times for safety violations in the two years prior to the blast. The mine was also recently cited when an inspection found that six of 50 air packs miners use underground in case of emergency were faulty.

The sole survivor of the disaster, Randal McCloy, has singled out improperly built seals to isolate an area of the mine where the explosion occurred and the miners' faulty air packs as the reasons for his coworkers' deaths. "Regardless of the ignition source," says a lawsuit McCloy has filed against ICG and others, "the explosion…was possible only because the seal in that area did not in fact 'seal' that area." The suit adds that the Omega block seals were "shoddily constructed."

Omega block is a lightweight fiber block that mine owners favor for seals because it is cheaper to construct than regular cement block, which is safer.

The state report said that some 400,000 cubic feet of methane was trapped in the sealed-off area, a level of 13 percent. Methane is explosive at concentrations of between 5 percent and 15 percent.

The seals were designed by federal standards to withstand forces of 20 pounds per square inch (psi), but state investigators found 10 seals were blown apart by forces of at least 95 psi, reported ABC News.

Hundreds of such seals remain in mines today.

Six months after the disaster, MSHA ordered that all seals must now withstand 50 psi, still only about half the force of the Sago blast.

The state report also suggested that bottom-mining in the area behind the seals—harvesting coal from a second seam beneath the mine floor—may have intensified the explosion.

As for the air packs the miners carried, McCloy said that "at least four" of the self-contained rescue devices failed to function. "As a result of the mass malfunction, Mr. McCloy and the other miners with working rescuers had to share their already limited supply of oxygen with those having none," his lawsuit reads.

The state report did not explain why the air packs failed. It only conceded in its summary that the self-rescuers "did not perform in the manner expected."

Even if the lightning strike did ignite the gas, the state report did not explain how this could have happened. An article in the December 8 issue of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* said, "The bolt would have had to zip more than a mile down a road, cross the Buckhannon River, and find its way a mile into the mine to reach the seals. 'We ourselves are still trying to understand better the possibilities of what happened,' Dr. Krider said."

Philip Krider is a University of Arizona expert on lightning who worked as a consultant on the report.

United Mine Workers of America spokesman Phil Smith told AP that the union doubts the theory, but if the state sticks with

Widows of Kentucky miners picket in Harlan County

BY TONY LANE

PITTSBURGH—Three widows of miners picketed a Harlan County, Kentucky, mine operated by Ralph Napier, owner of the Darby mine, where five miners were killed in an explosion last May. The Darby mine is now closed. The December 14 picket took place outside Orion Resources to demand an 18-month extension of health coverage for families of four of the five miners. Their medical insurance expires December 31.

Melissa Lee, whose husband Jimmy Lee died at Darby, said the coal mining industry can do "so much better," the December 15 *Harlan Daily Enterprise* reported. Lee said health coverage for deceased miners' children "ought to be automatic." She noticed several coal truck drivers who offered a nod or a wave. "I believe the men know that it could happen to them as well," she said, adding that the picket was also held for "other miners that this could happen to."

Lee was joined on the picket line by Claudia Cole and Stella Morris, whose husbands were killed in separate mining accidents in the last two years.

The state of Kentucky released a report December 1 on the Darby disaster. It says that a mine boss, Amon Brock, and a mine worker, Jimmy Lee, died from the blast. Three other miners—Roy Middleton, George Petra, and Paris Thomas Jr.—died from carbon monoxide poisoning. A sixth miner, Paul Ledford, survived.

The explosion was reportedly ignited by gas torches used to cut metal straps in the mine roof that ran through a seal wall. Electrical conductors are not allowed to run through seals. The open-flame torches were used in the mine's return air tunnel, where no ignition sources are allowed.

The owners used Omega block in the seal, even though similar seals did not withstand the Sago Mine blast about five months earlier (see article above), and knew about the metal straps before the seals were built. The mine was scheduled for a return visit by a federal mine inspector. State, union, and family representatives were not allowed to question the inspector directly. He had cited the seals as being defective.

"They call it an accident, but it was really caused by negligence," said Tony Oppegard, a mine safety lawyer who represents relatives of the four workers who died at Darby. He said the miners' widows want to know who ordered the straps repaired.

The state report faults the construction of the seals but says nothing about the use of Omega block. Neither does it say anything about the air packs, which are of the same model as those that did not function at Sago.

ON THE PICKET LINE

West Virginia coal mine fatality brings 2006 U.S. toll to 47

PITTSBURGH—John Elliot, 26, a coal miner at Dana Mining Company's Prime No. 1 Mine near Morgantown, West Virginia, was killed in a roof fall December 17. Elliot is the 47th coal miner killed on the job in the United States this year, the most since 1995. Elliot and two other workers were riding on a mantrip, a vehicle used to transport miners and equipment underground, when a section of roof fell, crushing him to death. Mine Safety and Health Administration records show that 33 roof collapses have occurred at this mine since January 2003.

Another coal miner was killed November 28 at the Spring Creek Coal Company surface mine in Montana when the wheels of a giant haul truck rolled over him after he got out of the cab when the brakes failed.

—Tony Lane

Striking Steelworkers picket Goodyear tire retail stores

Steelworkers on strike against Goodyear Tire and supporters picketed some 150 tire retail stores December 16 in their fight for a decent contract. Some 15,000 workers at 16 Goodyear plants in the United States and Canada, members of the United Steelworkers union (USW), have been on strike since October 5 against company concessionary demands. Bargaining between USW and the company resumed December 18.

Facing a shortage of Humvee tires for its military equipment, the U.S. Army is discussing measures to break the Steelworkers' strike. The December 15 *Financial Times* reported that Duncan Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said that the army is exploring a possible injunction under the Taft-Hartley Act to force 200 workers back to their jobs in the Topeka, Kansas, plant.

—Brian Williams



Militant/Lea Sherman

Rally at San Francisco piers December 9 against union busting by Hornblower Cruises.

Rally at San Francisco piers protests union-busting move

SAN FRANCISCO—Hundreds of unionists and their supporters marched and rallied December 9 on the piers here to protest a union-busting move by Hornblower Cruises. The company took over ferry service to Alcatraz in September, refusing to rehire 55 members of the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots, and of the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific, a division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. The ferry service had been a union operation since it began in 1973.

—Lea Sherman

Military coup in Fiji ousts unpopular government

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"As of six o'clock this evening the military has taken over the running of the government and the country," said Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, the commander of the Fijian armed forces, on December 5.

In the following days the military deposed the government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and installed a military officer as interim premier. Bainimarama presented the takeover as part of a campaign to "clean up" the government.

The coup has so far sparked few protests in Fiji. In New Zealand, many Fijians—speaking through letters in newspapers, TV interviews, and at workplaces—have expressed satisfaction at seeing the end of the Qarase government.

The governments of Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, have demanded Qarase's reinstatement and imposed sanctions on the nation of 846,000 people. Tourism, the country's main source of foreign exchange, has been thrown into crisis by the hostile stance of the two imperialist powers.

While the Australian government has stationed three warships off the Fijian coast, claiming they might be needed to evacuate its nationals, Prime Minister John Howard has rejected Qarase's plea for direct intervention.

"The possibility of Australian and Fijian troops firing on each other in the streets of Suva was not a prospect that I, for a moment, thought desirable," Howard said.

Numbering 3,500 soldiers, the Republic Fiji Military Forces, comprised overwhelmingly of indigenous Fijians, is well-equipped and trained, and has long years of experience as part of UN occupation forces, including in Iraq. Australia's foreign minister, Alexander Downer, called for "passive resistance" to the military takeover. New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark asked if there are any "loyal officers in Fiji [prepared] to tell the commander at the top of the force that his time is over?"

Right after the takeover, leaders of the influential Methodist Church and Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) led a chorus of condemnation. At the same time, Mahendra Chaudhry, leader of the opposition Labour Party, said he would work with Bainimarama to oppose "the endemic corruption and scams in government."

On December 8 the GCC said it would enter talks with the military leader.

The takeover is the latest development in a 20-year period of heightened political crisis and splits among Fiji's ruling layers.

In 1987 the rulers were shaken by the election of a government headed by the Fiji Labour Party. The new party won support among working people with its call for an end to racial divisions.

Throughout the history of modern Fiji, both the British colonial regime and governments since independence in 1970 have worked to divide indigenous Fijians, who are obligated to show loyalty to the chiefs, from Indo-Fijians. The latter are descendants of indentured laborers brought from India in the 19th century to work in Fiji's sugar plantations.

Labour's stance in the mid-1980s challenged the privileged position of the chiefs and the GCC. The latter retains powers given it by the colonial British administration in the 1870s, including the right to appoint the president and almost half the senate.

Shortly after Labour's victory, Brigadier Sitiveni Rabuka led a coup to overthrow the new government. He organized another coup later that year, and in 1992 won election as prime minister. Rabuka's coups and later policies reinforced the racial segregation on which chiefly power depends.

At the time of Rabuka's first coup, Indo-Fijians comprised 53 percent of the population. In the next two decades, tens of thousands of them emigrated, seeking to escape scapegoating and the continued decline of jobs in the sugar and garment export industries. Today Indo-Fijians are about 37 percent of Fiji's population.

The Labour Party won the elections again in 1999. One year later rightist thugs fronted by businessman George Speight marched into parliament and took Mahendra Chaudhry, then Fiji's prime minister, and other ministers hostage. Speight claimed the Labour-led government was an enemy of indigenous Fijians.

A two-month crisis was settled by the intervention of the army under the command of Bainimarama, who installed Qarase as prime minister. In the words of Fiji's *Islands Business*, Qarase's SDL party was "set up after the coup of 2000 as an all-Fijian party dedicated to the preservation of Fijian political supremacy over the Indians." Since then, Bainimarama and the prime minister he installed have been on a collision course. The army's commander campaigned against a bill that would have given amnesty to Speight and other perpetrators of the 2000 coup.

Bainimarama also opposed a bill that would have placed shoreline areas under so-called indigenous control, giving advantages to chiefly businessmen in the development of tourism ventures and empowering them to levy fees for fishing.

Bainimarama had said repeatedly that unless Qarase's government backed off its chauvinist policy course, the military would act.

Fiji's instability is fueled in part by deepening economic dislocation and insecurity that impact largely working people. The government reported in 2003 that 34 percent were living below the poverty line, up from 25 percent in 2000.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

January 1, 1982

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada—Delegates to the historic first congress of the National Youth Organization (NYO) of Grenada have decided to send an internationalist brigade of young teachers to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.

The brigade will collaborate with the Nicaraguan government to bring that country's literacy campaign to the Black and English-speaking population of Nicaragua. Thirty NYO leaders will participate in the year-long project in 1982.

This was one of the central decisions made by 400 delegates meeting here December 12 and 13. The delegates were elected during the last few months from 178 NYO groups and a membership of 8,000 young people from Grenada and her sister island of Carriacou.

The congress followed a year-and-a-half recruitment campaign, which won 7,000 new members to the NYO.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
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January 7, 1957

Reaction to bus integration increased this week in the form of violence and legal subterfuge by white-supremacist gangs and city officials in the three centers of the fight, Montgomery, Tallahassee, and Birmingham. Where the integrated bus movement is based on action, however, it appeared assured of success.

In Montgomery, where integrated riding has been an accomplished fact since Dec. 21, night bus service has been suspended as a result of gunfire attacks on the buses. At least four sniping attacks on Montgomery buses have occurred since integration began. City police, under the command of White Citizen's Council member Clyde Sellers, have made no arrests. Rev. Martin Luther King, president of the Montgomery Association which led the boycott of Jim Crow buses has announced that MIA is now preparing action to secure voting rights for Negroes and to end segregated schools.



January 2, 1932

On February 22, 1932, the Disarmament Conference called by the League of Nations will convene at Geneva. This conference is to give consideration to the limitation of armaments by the various powers. It will devote much talk on the need to "outlaw" war as the means employed by nations to solve their economic and political differences and rivalries….

Armaments and wars are very expensive affairs and no doubt the imperialist powers would like to decrease expenditures, particularly so, if by lopping off some small sums here and there, they can satisfy to some extent the demands of the workers and the petit-bourgeois middle classes for a reduction in armaments and their longing for peace. But in all these years of disarmament confabs, war "outlawry" and pacifist talk, the powers, particularly the United Sates, Great Britain, France and Japan have been increasing their armament expenditures.

U.S. immigration raids

Continued from front page

295 workers were arrested in Cactus, Texas; 261 in Greeley; 230 in Worthington; 145 in Hyrum, Utah; and 261 in Grand Island, Nebraska. These include workers originally from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Peru, Laos, Sudan, and Ethiopia. All the plants except the Hyrum facility are organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW).

Many workers here are speaking out against what happened. Kenneth Paul, a U.S.-born trimmer and a member of UFCW Local 1149, told the *Militant* as he was leaving the plant, "The way the ICE agents carried out the raid reminded me of my experience in the Marine Corps. It was fast. They wouldn't let us talk to each other."

"In my opinion," he said, "if people want to work, you should give them their work papers."

Another U.S.-born worker, who asked that her name not be published, said that while she thought it was important to "follow the law," the coworkers they arrested "only came here to work, just like us." Describing the raid, she said, "I thought it was uncalled for, the way they made people sit for hours in handcuffs. That was cruel."

Workers rounded up by ICE agents were taken in buses to the National Guard's Camp Dodge near Des Moines. More than 500 workers arrested at three plants in the region were shipped there for "processing." By the weekend, most had been deported or sent to federal detention centers.

Michael Said, lawyer for some of the imprisoned workers, said cops pressured many to accept deportation, including some with legal papers. "It basically goes like this: 'You have no rights. Your lawyer doesn't know what he's talking about. If you go before a judge, you will wind up spending three months in jail. But if you sign here you'll be back in Mexico in a few hours, and you won't have to go to jail," he told the *Des Moines Register*. Most workers had no access to a lawyer.

Two days after the arrests, 200 people held a protest at the federal building in Des Moines. Several dozen UFCW officials from around the region participated. At the protest, UFCW Region 6 official Carl Ariston said the immigration cops "have been given carte blanche to terrorize 13,000 workers, their families and communities."

More than 500 people attended a December 15 meeting at St. Mary's Church here, called by officials of the Iowa division of Latino Affairs. Workers and their families demanded to know the status of their loved ones. Lawyers spoke about not being able to see workers held at Camp Dodge.

Two days later a "Community Solidarity Meeting" of 200 people was held here. International UFCW official Todd Chase encouraged workers to come by the local union to discuss their concerns, and said the union is working to make sure everyone gets their paychecks.

In the discussion period, Chuck Guerra, a production worker at the Swift plant, said the raids "are an attack on the labor movement. The union has to get involved in this fight. We need to demand legalization for all immigrants." His comments were well-received.

Several weeks before the raid, Swift fired more than 400 workers at its plants, saying it had been told by U.S. officials that their Social Security numbers did not match federal records. A week before the raid, a federal grand jury indicted five Swift workers on charges of using fraudulent papers to get hired.

Diana Newberry, who works on the loin line at Swift, said in a Channel 13 interview the day of the raid, "We need to stand up against this and fight for legalization of all immigrants now. They are arresting my coworkers, not criminals."

Concepción Mendoza, a single mother with five children, was released from Camp Dodge after three days. She refused to sign papers for immediate deportation. "The agents told her she had no rights and would likely go to jail and pay up to $40,000 in fines unless she signed a deportation order," the *Des Moines Register* reported.

But Mendoza stood her ground. She eventually gained access to an attorney and was released on the basis of being a 14-year resident with no criminal record and three U.S.-born children. She now awaits a hearing.

Mendoza said that during the raid workers were herded into the cafeteria and ordered into three groups: U.S. citizens, legal residents, and "*mojados,*" a derogatory term meaning "wetbacks." Handcuffed, she was taken to a Homeland Security bus, with the windows darkened in order to isolate them.

While her five children waited to learn their mother's fate, they saw a photo in the *Register* of their uncle, who also works in the plant. He was in handcuffs being forced onto a plane. The family still does not know his whereabouts.

Three days after the raid, with only about 65 percent of day shift workers on the job, production at the Marshalltown plant had fallen by as much as a third.

Joe Torres, a kill floor worker with 10 years in the plant, told the *Militant*, "They still want the same level of production, but now it's one person working where you used to have two. My partner was taken in the raid, and now I have to do both his work and mine."

Frank Forrestal is a kill floor worker at Tyson Foods in Perry, Iowa, and a member of UFCW Local 1149.



Militant/Carlos Samaniego

Volunteers distribute donated food December 16 at the UFCW union hall to families of those detained in immigration raids four days earlier in Worthington, Minnesota.

❖

BY NELSON GONZALEZ AND CARLOS SAMANIEGO

WORTHINGTON, Minnesota—In recent interviews, workers at the Swift plant here described the scene December 12 as more than 100 armed U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents entered the slaughterhouse at 7:30 a.m. and deployed themselves at every stairwell, bathroom, hallway, and department. They guarded entrances and exits to the plant. Some 230 workers were arrested and taken away in 10 Homeland Security buses.

The Swift plant employs between 1,800 and 2,300 workers. Nearly two-thirds are immigrants, mostly Latin American–born but also workers from Asia or Africa.

Several workers, who asked that their names not be published, told the *Militant* how ICE agents, aided by plant supervisors, herded them into locker rooms, where they were told to put away their equipment and submit to interrogations by the federal cops.

Some described being crowded into different rooms in the plant, where everyone was handcuffed and searched. They were denied food and water and not allowed to make a phone call or even use the bathroom.

Mike Potter, president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1161, which organizes workers at this plant, said in an interview, "When I tried to go into the cafeteria to talk to the workers, I was told by an ICE agent to leave. When I told him the union's contract language gave me the right to represent these workers, he demanded proof. He followed me to the union hall and when I showed him the contract, he brushed it off, saying the federal warrant authorizing the raid superseded it."

Immigrant rights lawyers Bruce Nestor and Susana DeLeon reported that when they tried to meet with workers in the plant to provide legal representation, they were barred by ICE agents.

During the several-hour interrogation period, workers said, ICE agents demanded to see their papers. When workers asked to call home to have their papers brought to the plant, the cops refused and tried unsuccessfully to intimidate workers into allowing them to search their homes.

By the late afternoon, after the interrogations and arrests, the company attempted to restart production by telling the remaining workers to go back to work. Many refused and went home.

Swift employee Enrique Manrique told the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* in a December 13 interview how his wife, who is also employed at the plant, was thrown on a bus and taken to a prison in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Other workers have been sent to detention centers in Iowa, while 42 others were locked up in the county jail in Worthington.

Many workers who were released on bond pending court hearings on their immigration status say that Swift has been asking them to return to work.

Local immigrant rights supporters, working out of the UFCW offices here, are planning a morning protest outside the county jail. Activists in St. Paul, together with UFCW Local 789 and other organizations, are planning to demonstrate in front of the offices of Sen. Norman Coleman to denounce the raids and support the workers.

On December 17, dozens of people came into the UFCW hall, seeking information and helping distribute more than seven tons of food collected in the Twin Cities area for families of arrested workers.

Meat packers, others eagerly buy 'Militant'

NEW YORK—Sales of the *Militant* have been brisk across the country as working people respond to the six-state immigration raids and other attacks on the working class.

Some 122 workers at the Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, bought copies of the paper as they left work December 16 and 18; another five subscribed on the spot. More than 200 people in Iowa picked up copies of the paper in four days, reported Frank Forrestal, a meat packer in Des Moines.

In Austin, Twin Cities, and Worthington, Minnesota, 22 people subscribed in three days, including several who renewed their subs, said Tom Fiske, a meat packer in St. Paul. Fiske said some 150 people picked up copies of the paper in that state over the weekend.


Militant/Frank Forrestal

Selling 'Militant' December 16 outside Swift plant in Marshalltown, Iowa.

In Colorado, 34 packinghouse workers bought the paper as they left work at an Excel plant, wrote Joel Britton, a *Militant* supporter from San Francisco. Another 27 people bought copies and five subscribed when *Militant* distributors went door-to-door in and around Greeley, where immigration agents had raided the Swift plant days before.

Jacquie Henderson, a garment worker in Houston, said workers bought 27 copies and one subscription at the gate to a Tyson plant December 17.

At the December 16 march of 10,000 in New York against the police killing of Sean Bell, 173 people picked up copies of the paper and six subscribed. Twenty-two meat workers got copies and one renewed his subscription December 20 at the entrance to the Hunts Point meat market in the Bronx.

—OLYMPIA NEWTON

Cuba and the fight for Puerto Rico's independence

Below is an excerpt from Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity *by Rafael Cancel Miranda. It is available in Spanish and English and is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. Cancel Miranda is a leader of Puerto Rico's independence struggle. He is one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists who spent more than a quarter of a century in U.S. prisons following armed protests they carried out in Washington against colonial rule. Miranda was freed from prison in 1979 through an international defense campaign. Copyright © 1998 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA

MARTIN KOPPEL: How can the majority be won to the perspective of independence?

CANCEL MIRANDA: We have to reach out to the greatest number of our people with the truth and the need for independence. Independence is not simply a nice ideal. It is a necessity.

We have to reach the new generations, so they will continue the struggle until the time comes when different forces in the world come together and strengthen our struggle. We are part of the world, and what happens all over the world affects our country.



Granma/Jorge Luis Gonzalez

At a July 7, 2006, ceremony in Havana, Cancel Miranda, left, receives the José Martí Order from Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly. It is the highest honor issued by the Cuban government to non-Cuban leaders.

The United States uses our young people as cannon fodder in their wars. In the Vietnam War, Puerto Rico had a disproportionately high number of casualties relative to its population compared to the United States. The same thing happened in the Korean War.

They sent us to kill Dominicans in the Dominican Republic in 1965. When they invaded Panama in 1989, they sent us to kill Panamanians, who are our brothers and sisters….

I asked on the radio the other day; "What are Puerto Ricans doing in Bosnia?" If Rockefeller wants to send his sons to fight in Bosnia, let him do it. But he's not going to send his sons to Bosnia. He's going to send your sons, the sons of John Doe and Mary Jane.

So young people are affected by this colonial reality. We have to show workers why independence is in their interests as workers; so they can be the owners of their country and their factories, so they can be the owners of what they produce. So that everything doesn't end up in the coffers of Wall Street. So that it stays here for their development.

We have to explain what annexation would mean. If Puerto Rico were to be made a state, they would treat us exactly like they treat our communities in New York, Connecticut, Chicago, and Los Angeles….

As Pedro Albizu Campos[1] said sixty years ago, if we don't free ourselves, we will go from being masters to being serfs, from being owners to being squatters.

KOPPEL: The revolutionary government of Cuba has campaigned on behalf of the independence of Puerto Rico and the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners. What is your view of what the Cuban revolution represents?

CANCEL MIRANDA: The hope of us all. As long as Cuba is there, there is hope that we will be able to go through those doors. If Cuba falls, our struggle will take many more years. I'm not referring just to Puerto Rico but to all our peoples. So far, Cuba is the only country that U.S. financial and military interests don't control.

Cuba is also a psychological weapon for our peoples, because they instill these complexes to make us think that without the Yankees we just can't survive. The sun would stop shining. The moon would fall.

Yet Cuba has survived. Not only without the Yankees. In spite of the Yankees, and in spite of all the confrontations and the U.S. blockade. Without that blockade, Cuba would not have to go through these crises. But it has weathered the crisis and has survived.

For me, Cuba goes much beyond a question of economic survival. It gives you a sense of the dignity of life. Before, when you saw a Latino in the U.S. movies, we were either someone's sidekick, or we were a "Latin Lover" to entertain them. They ridiculed us.

But ever since Fidel [Castro], they learned to respect us. Because Fidel and the Cuban revolutionaries are no one's sidekick. Fidel makes me proud, just like the pride Sandino[2] gives me.

In Cuba today, life is not dictated by appearances as it is here. Here under this system, your worth is measured by how much you carry in your pockets—even if you're a gangster. Your person isn't worth anything. You're worth something if you have a luxury car, a Volvo, a Mercedes-Benz, whatever. Your worth is measured by the car you own, not by how you use it. But even a monkey can drive a Volvo, and it doesn't stop being a monkey.

[1]Pedro Albizu Campos (1891–1965) was the central leader of the Nationalist Party and the independence movement in Puerto Rico from the 1930s through the 1950s. He spent many years in U.S. prisons for his anti-imperialist activities.

[2]Augusto César Sandino led an army of workers and peasants against the U.S. military occupation of Nicaragua between 1927 and 1933.

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‘Capitalists dug our graves in vain; Mar

Remarks by speakers at presentation of ‘Nueva Internacional’ at Venezuela’s

The following are excerpts of remarks by Mary-Alice Waters, Oscar Rodríguez, Zuleica Romay, and Harry Villegas at a November 15 meeting to present issues 6 and 7 of the magazine Nueva Internacional. *The event took place in Caracas as part of Venezuela’s Second International Book Fair. An article reporting on the meeting was published in the December 4* Militant.

Waters, editor of New International, *which is also published in Spanish as* Nueva Internacional, *chaired the event. Part of her opening remarks appear below.*

Oscar Rodríguez is a member of the legislative assembly in the state of Miranda, which surrounds Caracas. He is also a leader of the Youth of the Fifth Republic (JVR), which is affiliated with Venezuela’s governing party, the Movement of the Fifth Republic.

Zuleica Romay is vice president of the Cuban Book Institute.

Harry Villegas, a brigadier general in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces no longer on active duty, is vice president of the executive secretariat of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. The association is made up of Cubans who have taken part in revolutionary struggles and internationalist missions over more than half a century. Villegas is widely known as Pombo, the nom de guerre given him by Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban Revolution, alongside whom Villegas worked and fought for a decade, during Cuba’s revolutionary war as well as in the Congo and Bolivia. Villegas is also a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, a National Assembly deputy, and Hero of the Cuban Revolution.

Footnotes and translation of the remarks by Rodríguez, Romay, and Villegas, excerpts of which are published here, are by the Militant. *The translation and remarks by Waters are copyright © 2006 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*



Militant photos by Linda Joyce

Above: Panel presenting issues 6 and 7 of *Nueva Internacional* November 15 in Caracas as part of Venezuela’s Second International Book Fair. From left, Oscar Rodríguez, a member of the legislative assembly in Miranda state and leader of the Youth of the Fifth Republic; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the magazine; and Zuleica Romay, vice president of the Cuban Book Institute. Right: Harry Villegas, a brigadier general of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces, makes a special contribution during the discussion.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

To initiate our discussion, let me say a few words about *Nueva Internacional*—a publication that is new to many of you here today.

As our masthead says, *Nueva Internacional* is “A Magazine of Marxist Politics and Theory.” It is not the organ of a party, but the members of the editorial board are leaders of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. They include SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, who is the author of the lead articles in these two issues we are discussing. We also benefit from the collaboration of supporters in other countries.

The purpose of *Nueva Internacional* is not discussion for the sake of discussing. It is a tool to arm and to be used by workers and youth actively involved in the practical work of building a communist party and youth organization—in the United States above all.

We believe that building such a proletarian movement is a historical necessity. None of the burning social questions of our epoch will be settled short of working people in the United States taking the economic and military power to rule out of the hands of the class that today imposes its interests on the world.

Building a communist party in the United States—or in any other country—is an objective inseparable from the tasks of proletarian internationalism. It can only be reached working together with others fighting for the same objectives around the world. That is one of the reasons we value so greatly collaboration and opportunities to discuss these questions in gatherings like this one today….

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Nueva Internacional is above all directed to the youth, to new generations coming to political consciousness as they enter into struggles along this working-class line of march. This is one reason it means a great deal to have Oscar here today, speaking on behalf of the leadership of the JVR. It is young people above all who must absorb and internalize the proletarian way of doing politics. And we know from experience that there is a real hunger among young people—students, workers, and others—for the kind of political depth the material in *Nueva Internacional* allows them to reach for and debate.

The single largest sales of *Nueva Internacional* in its various languages have been to young people from around the world at events such as the World Festival of Youth and Students that took place here in Caracas last year.

We also know that to make a revolution it is not enough to be young. If that were the case, our class would have triumphed long ago. Without continuity of proletarian thought and organization, without a mix of experiences among generations of revolutionary fighters, without collaboration across borders—and without each new generation making the lessons of the modern international working-class movement its own—victory is very far from certain. It will be won, if at all, at a much higher price than necessary. Those lessons have been paid for in blood by those who have gone before us.

That’s why having compañera Zuleica speaking from the perspective of the Cuban Revolution is so important, and why the participation of compañero Pombo means a great deal.

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I want to emphasize only one political point about the content of these two issues. It is the comments of the other panelists, as well as those of you who are here with us today, that deserve the most time.

With conviction and with facts, these issues *of Nueva Internacional* put forward the view that we are today living through a great turning point in the international class struggle. The world that is being born today is not the world we have known, it is not the world we have lived in for the last 60 years. Communists and broader vanguard forces must fully absorb this historic shift and begin acting on its political logic.

The origins of the new world situation do not lie in any single event such as September 11. They do not lie in specific policies pursued by one or another Congress or U.S. president. The outcome of the just-concluded congressional elections in the United States will change nothing on this front and working people have nothing to celebrate in the electoral victory of the Democratic Party candidates.

Yesterday, for example, the Democratic Party members of Congress, as one of their first postelection actions, led the fight to defeat a proposed bill that would have normalized trade relations with Vietnam. As we all know, and our Cuban compañeros especially have lived the consequences of this for more than 45 years, trade restrictions are one of imperialism’s weapons of war.

The underlying crisis driving the imperialist masters is not conjunctural. It is rooted in the economic downturn that began some three decades ago with the exhaustion of the economic expansion that grew out of the preparations for World War II. What is unfolding now is the *acceleration* of that crisis in all its manifestations, including the increasingly sharp conflicts born of competition among the imperialist powers. “One of capitalism’s infrequent long winters has begun,” *Nueva Internacional* explains. And for us it is going to be very long and very hot.

Decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions—as well as the resulting deepening of class battles—lie before us. That’s why we need men and women who have no fear of the heat, men and women who have the stomach for the kinds of struggles that are coming.

In preparation for these coming battles at home and abroad, Washington is implementing the most far-reaching change in its military policy and organization since the end of the 1940s when the U.S. rulers established a massive, permanent military command and national security structure to “contain” the Soviet Union. It is important to emphasize, however, that today’s course is neither Rumsfeld’s nor Bush’s. It is the *bipartisan* policy of the U.S. ruling class, already begun under Clinton.

In the last few days, for example, under cover of calls for more and more congressional hearings and commission of every sort to “examine” the reasons for their problems in Iraq, and talk about the eventual reduction of U.S. troop levels there, the direction the U.S. government is heading is the opposite. Yesterday, the newly elected leader of the Democratic Party caucus in the Senate, Harry Reid, proposed a $75 billion increase in the military budget to restore the combat capacities of U.S. Army units in order to allow them to *increase* troop levels in Iraq as well as Afghanistan and



xism remains alive'

2nd international book fair in Caracas

elsewhere as necessary. Bush is suggesting that 20,000 more troops will be sufficient to rapidly "pacify" Iraq.

There are deep-going factional divisions within and between the capitalist parties and other institutions of government in the United States, including the military high command. But the rancor of their discourse does not flow from conflicting strategic perspectives. It comes from something else—the more or less conscious realization of many that whatever policy changes they implement, they cannot contain the march of history. That whatever they do they cannot "win." For the U.S. ruling families, the periodic changing of the guard from Republican to Democrat and back again is a useful, indeed indispensable, means by which they try to work through their tactical disagreements and adjust their course, but they do so with less and less conviction or confidence.

The imperialist rulers insist they are engaged in "a long war" against "terrorism"—one they will wage for a "generation" or more. But the real targets are evident to us all. That is why the working people of Venezuela were singled out by the Pentagon in its most recent policy review early this year as a growing "source of political and economic instability" in the world. That is why Washington has now named a special "manager" for "intelligence operations" directed against both Cuba and Venezuela.

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For revolutionists, the fact that the world we have known for more than a half century has disappeared is no reason for despair, much less fear. Quite the opposite. What we see in this emerging world is another transformation beginning. Impelled by these momentous changes, by the increasing social and economic pressures on a growing majority of the toilers—including steps to restrict political and democratic rights even within the more stable bourgeois democracies—working people are responding. We are resisting. Including within the United States.

Often this reality is hard to see from the outside, but nowhere has it been more broadly evident than in the massive working-class mobilizations for immigrant rights that exploded onto the streets of the United States earlier this year. Millions—and not only immigrants—proudly downed tools and marched under the banner "We are workers, not criminals. Legalize all immigrants now!" Already their actions, harbingers of what is to come, have irreversibly strengthened the workers movement in the United States.

It is the political logic of these great shifts that we act on now.

As these issues of *Nueva Internacional* express it: Our politics start with the world capitalism has engendered, and how—not to *reform* it—but to *transform* it. Beyond recognition.

This is what brings us together here today.

BY OSCAR RODRÍGUEZ

Thank you for the invitation to this event. I am proud to represent the Movement of the Fifth Republic at this important activity.

I have only been able to read part of "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun" but aspects of the article have forcefully caught my attention. One example is the section titled "Compete or Die," which explains how capital acts in the world, and how sometimes we don't take into account that its tentacles extend everywhere. Perhaps we see some of the consequences of that in the communities where we live. But I think it's important for us all to know this macro-analysis. I urge you to promote this article and to read it together in study circles in our communities in order to forge revolutionary consciousness.

In the past being a revolutionary was a little more difficult. Simply passing a message on to another comrade implied danger, because the intelligence agencies had orders to spy on revolutionaries.

Today this dynamic is different. This revolution is unique. A young person from a barrio can sign up for a mission, succeed in getting a scholarship, buy food at a Mercal, and if he gets sick can see a doctor at a Barrio Adentro clinic.[1] And then he says I am a revolutionary. But his level of consciousness is not what is needed.

Today it's much easier to be a revolutionary. But this ease can lead to breaking your spirit. We have to consolidate revolutionary consciousness through reading, commitment, values, and by promoting study circles that can increase comradeship.

Theory also has to go along with practice. That's why I urge the youth, and all those we have worked with in one way or another, not only to organize study circles but to apply what we read.

Such a dynamic will allow this material to reach into the consciousness of our communities.

I began to see how this magazine makes a diagnosis of capitalism and its workings. I was surprised because I was aware of some things but I did not know how the capitalists, the banks, the financial institutions have no scruples, no principles, no values. They simply use interest rates and other means to accumulate riches at the expense of the majority, of working people.

This article helps us see from another point of view the hand of much bigger forces at work behind seemingly local conflicts. It helps us see how the hand of imperialism, the hand of capitalism, operates in our communities.

I'll describe an experience we went through in the state of Miranda. Until two years ago we had a governor who represented the interests of the right, including having participated in the April 11 military coup.[2]



Militant/Linda Joyce

Part of the audience at presentation of *Nueva Internacional* magazine in Caracas

Two years ago there was the presidential recall referendum, which we won with 60 percent of the vote.[3] That demoralized the opposition and many of them stayed away from the polls in the gubernatorial election that took place within a month after the referendum. So we were able to win a state where the opposition has had a strong base.

Since then, we have instituted a series of public policies in Miranda aimed at dismantling the effective privatization of health care by the previous administration.

In education and health care they were privatizing hospitals, clinics, schools.

In the last two years the new administration dismantled these policies and the state has assumed responsibility for these services.

Today I participated along with President Hugo Chávez in the inauguration of a new medical clinic, which has equipment with the latest, most advanced, technology, in Chuao, located in the municipality of Baruta, here in Caracas, where the opposition has had a strong base because it is an upper middle-class neighborhood.

This shows the opposition that we are governing both for the rich and for the poor. It's clear that we must give priority to the poor, because they are the majority and they were excluded for so many years. But we also govern for the middle classes.

We faced a financial crisis in this country a decade ago, which cut deep into the pockets of those who had savings. And who had savings? The middle classes. If someone would deposit 10 million bolivars ($4,650) into a bank, financial institutions would often rob them of up to 6 million and leave them only with 4 million.

They had also imposed interest rates on credit cards of as much as 80 percent. People would use their credit cards to buy something and would be suffocated by debt.

What we were looking at as local problems were in fact the results of such policies, what can be described as capitalist cannibalism. Capitalists pushing to accumulate riches and power without any kind of principles, values, or purpose.

I greatly appreciate the invitation to take part in this meeting. And I am committed to include the material from this magazine in the study circles we are already organizing with the youth.

We are going to absorb it and promote it so that others understand it, which will help in building a stronger popular movement, one with conviction.

BY ZULEICA ROMAY

I have read the two issues of *Nueva Internacional* very attentively, above all the article by Jack Barnes entitled "Our Politics Start with the World," including the exchange afterward, the question-and-answer period. I think it is very revealing.

There is an expression at the beginning of the article that says something like, "We say as Lenin did in 1920…."[4] I carried out an experiment. I gave the magazine to a compañero of mine at the Cuban book stand, a young man, about 20 years younger than me, to read the opening paragraphs and tell me what he thought. He asked me, "Can one repeat something Lenin said in 1920?"

I answered, "Repeat no, but understand yes." Because the world has changed in many superficial ways, but in essence it is the world Lenin knew in 1920. We have to know how to read Lenin and the classics of Marxism. We cannot read them literally. But you can be sure that perhaps by changing the word order or adding some new arguments, we would be able to say many of the things that Lenin wrote or said in 1920.

If we sometimes think that these things said or written long ago are no longer relevant it is because we're attuned to the superficial changes that have occurred in the world. We often don't realize that this remains the same unjust world, the same world that pays for the unbridled nature of the minority with the blood of the majority, as it was when the Soviet state was emerging from that classical proletarian revolution at the end of the bloody First World War.

Thus I find very interesting the way in which *Nueva Internacional* deals with

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1. Barrio Adentro (Into the Barrio) is a program sponsored by the Venezuelan government that has brought some 20,000 Cuban medical personnel offering quality health care free of charge in working-class neighborhoods and rural areas where working people have had little or no access to medical services. Barrio Adentro and other social programs, such as a nationwide literacy campaign, are referred to in Venezuela as "missions." The Mercals are government supermarkets that sell food at subsidized prices.

2. In an attempted coup on April 11, 2002, Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez and a number of his ministers and other government officials were arrested. In response, hundreds of thousands of working people poured out of the poor neighborhoods of Caracas. In face of this massive show of support for the Chávez administration, the military divided and the coup collapsed after two days.

3. In 2004 the imperialist-backed opposition tried once again to oust Chávez, this time through a recall referendum that took place August 15. With a massive, organized effort by workers and farmers throughout the country, the referendum was defeated, with more than 59 percent voting "no."

4. At the beginning of "Our Politics Start with the World," Barnes quotes a statement made in December 1920 at the All-Russia Congress of Soviets by V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. "Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire country," Lenin said.

'Marxism remains alive'

Continued from page 9

the topic of electrification.

Back then an attempt was being made not only to carry out a great social program, not only to apply important advances in science and technology, but also to recognize that for backward Russia, whose countryside was marked by semifeudal conditions, electrification meant the possibility of transforming human beings into new men and women by creating new conditions of life and work, new conditions of material and spiritual well-being.

When we reanalyze these questions today, we realize that technology has a much deeper meaning than the solely functional view we sometimes have of it. Because technology is associated—from its very beginning and above all in its application—with a specific mode of production.

There is a section in the article that very perceptively points out that many of the great scientific advances of the 19th and 20th centuries came about as a result of wars of conquest, in order to expand the power to crush other peoples, to subjugate other peoples. In this case, technology was used to serve very spurious interests.

For that reason, under socialism we don't simply inherit technology. Rather we learn it, transform it, and put it to the service of humanity and of a different society.

It seems to me that the magazine's presentation of this subject is very up-to-date, even though it often utilizes documents, phrases, and facts drawn from decades past, from the last century.

I am very struck too by the way in which the article deals with the worker-peasant alliance today. It's true that imperialism has led to a diminishing number of peasants. With rationalizations, slogans, and demagogic policies concerning an alleged modernization, they have turned peasants into serfs once again. But it's no longer a feudal lord who is the master. Now it's a transnational food producer.

Because of this process, when one speaks of the worker-peasant alliance, we sometimes think it's impossible. Meanwhile the peasant is increasingly proletarianized, our army of workers becomes numerically stronger, with more people to fight, more people to educate, more people who will transform society.

I tell you sincerely that in a country like Cuba where Marxism is studied, where Marxism is applied, I'm surprised to realize that it's been a long time since I've seen anything written that takes up the worker-peasant alliance.

In reading *Nueva Internacional* I found myself asking: How would that alliance look now? How could it be achieved? And I really think that this article gives answers to those questions—not recipes, but answers.

In Cuba there is a TV program with a very interesting journalist who presents a topic and invites people to participate in a televised discussion, and at the end he says: draw your own conclusions. I feel the same way about this article. One has to keep thinking about it.

What stuck in my mind the most after reading the magazine is the need for us to continue pointing out, as Lenin said, that it's not enough for the proletariat to be subjected to conditions of exploitation. What is needed is a vanguard to explain it, to document it, to help people think about the facts of life. And the same thing is true with Marxist theory.

After all, many graves were dug to bury us all, together with our ideas. Barely 15 years have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the world is seeing that all those graves were dug in vain, because Marxism is still alive.

Nevertheless this must be demonstrated. Even more so because at a certain point in Cuba and many other places we presented Marxism as a finished science. It was like the Bible, in the sense that there was nothing in it to be changed, all that remained was to do what was postulated. We went through an era of dogmatism, of schematicism. Some time ago we broke free of that ideological dead weight, but we still have to carry out a major discussion.

The other day a compañero here in the book fair was telling me: "What you did in Cuba is no longer possible. It's not possible to overthrow a power, an overwhelming power, by shooting rifles from the hilltops." It seems to me, for the reasons Mary-Alice explained, that the world is moving in a direction that will once again create the conditions that will make such methods of struggle possible once again.

That is why I believe the dissemination of Marxist theory is important—living theory that has been enriched with practice showing that there are many roads, specific to each people.

Here some people say, "They are Cubanizing Venezuela." But that's not true. The Venezuelans are doing things their way, and they're certainly not asking our permission.

What we have to do, above all, is disseminate the theory that lies behind our actions. Because we are very good at action. We are very good at deeds. Very good at fighting. But it's difficult for us to explain to the person marching beside us why their participation is needed, and that person simply has no idea. A person without convictions goes to a demonstration accompanying someone else, goes to a rally in support of someone, but he or she doesn't go because their consciousness tells them this is where they must be. And that is our job: to instill in people the ideas that lead them to move on their own, because of their own convictions.

To the extent that we achieve this goal, using this type of publication and many other means, I believe the better world we talk so much about will more and more become possible.

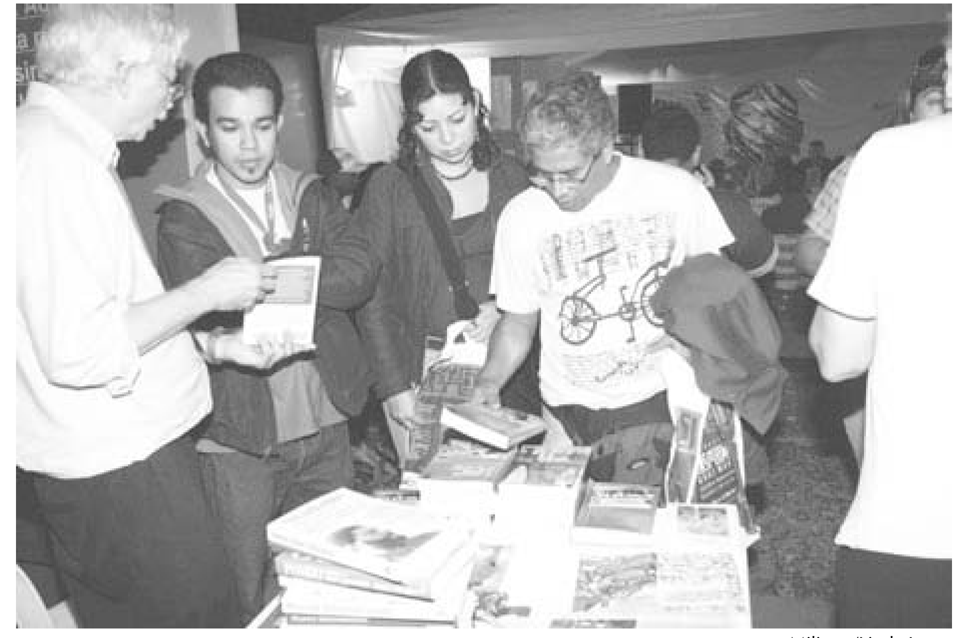
BY HARRY VILLEGAS

For those of us who participated in the presentation of the two issues of *Nueva Internacional* in Cuba earlier this year, it gives us great satisfaction to see that you are discussing them here.

Without getting into theoretical concepts that you heard presented by people who have read these issues of the magazine more recently than I and have a much broader scope, I want to say that I think the importance of *Nueva Internacional* resides in the search for a theoretical understanding of the reality of the present-day world through the lens of Marxism and Leninism.

I take as a given that when we speak of Marxism, we are speaking of a dialectical science, not something static. A science that sees the world in continuous motion and evolution, whose application is not uniform for each country.

There are things that are specific to each country. The Venezuelan revolution has its own characteristics, starting from how it arose. The Cuban revolution has its own characteristics, starting from how it arose. The Russian revolution had its own characteristics starting too from its own essence.



Militant/Linda Joyce

Workers, students, and others buy copies of the magazine *Nueva Internacional* and other books and pamphlets at the end of the November 15 event in Caracas.

That's why it's necessary to draw from the experiences of all revolutions.

You have to draw on your experiences here, which have been peaceful. But I recall something Che said, which I'll never forget, since I was at his side for a long time: that imperialism's nature is not peaceful. And since imperialism's nature is not peaceful, we can't think that it is going to leave us in peace. We always have to be prepared, analyzing, investigating in the light of Marxism, which is objective and concrete, looking for how we can know this system better and better.

It is a military principle that you can't develop a battle plan if you don't know the characteristics of the enemy. Even in irregular warfare, guerrilla warfare. I saw here a copy of Che's study *Guerrilla Warfare*, in which the analysis of the enemy is decisive—one must know how the enemy employs his weapons, his most modern weapons; what importance they have at the present time.

You are not going to be attacked with nuclear weapons, therefore it's not important for you to study nuclear weapons. We're making a supposition, of course, even though nothing is guaranteed. Otherwise we would cease being dialectical.

I think that the existence of a magazine that analyzes imperialism in its overall manifestations today is important for our discussions, so that each of us can really draw our own conclusions, as Zuleica said. So that we can conquer the weapons, the ideas, the elements that enable us to defend our revolution. Because we have our own revolution, we have a model for the construction of socialism. For me one of José Martí's ideas is universal. It's for the entire world: To build a homeland with all and for the good of all, and in such a country to conquer the highest degree possible of social justice.

The positions of *Nueva Internacional* have coincided in some cases with the reality of our revolutionary process.

One of the things Pathfinder Press has done the most, is to disseminate, through interviews, the experience of many Cuban combatants from their origins up through their participation in the construction of socialism.

On Saturday night there will be a presentation here of *Our History Is Still Being Written*, a book that has been promoted by the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, and I promised Mary-Alice I'd participate in that activity.

If you are able to be there you will hear about a young Chinese man named Sío Wong, who is head of Cuba's state reserves today. You will hear about where Sío Wong came from, and how at a certain moment in the revolutionary war, Sierra Maestra, he was given responsibility for the state reserves.[5]

We were still not a state, but Fidel put him in charge of the Rebel Army's reserves in the Sierra Maestra. And Camilo[6] and others arrived and convinced Sío Wong that their column was hungry and that they should be given a sack of sugar from the reserves. So Fidel removed Sío Wong from his position. Because Fidel told him that if these were reserves he [Fidel] was the one to decide what to do with them. No one else had the power to give them to anyone, no matter how much need there was at that time.

What is it that I want to convey to you? That the most important thing at a given moment is discipline. A conscious discipline, in which everyone carries out what each of us has to do as a revolutionary. That is decisive for you and for us Cubans. Because without discipline, there is nothing systematic, there is no comprehensive approach, the revolutionary message doesn't come through with all the force and integral approach required.

The main thing I want to say here today is that we are very grateful for having been invited, and we believe that the effort under way for many years will bear fruit. Not just for us. These materials are also being disseminated broadly among U.S. workers, among Latinos, among other English-speaking peoples, in addition to Spanish-speaking people.

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5. Harry Villegas was referring to the presentation of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution,* a book by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. The event took place November 18 as part of Venezuela's Second International Book Fair. An article on the meeting appeared in the December 11 *Militant.* Sío Wong describes the incident on the Rebel Army reserves in the Sierra Maestra mountains that Villegas refers to here in pages 116–17 of *Our History Is Still Being Written.*

6. Camilo Cienfuegos was captain in column 4 of the Rebel Army, which was headed by Fidel Castro and led the 1956–58 revolutionary war in Cuba to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. He was promoted to commander in 1958, and became the Rebel Army's chief of staff in January 1959. He was killed in October of that year when the plane he was riding was lost at sea.

EDITORIALS

Cuba stands for exploited of world

The National Assembly of the People of Cuba condemns the exploitation of man by man, and the exploitation of the underdeveloped countries by imperialist finance capital.... [It] proclaims before the Americas:

The right of peasants to the land; the right of workers to the fruit of their labor; the right of children to education; the right of the sick to medical and hospital care; the right of the young people to a job; the right of students to a free education that is both practical and scientific; the right of Blacks and Indians to "full human dignity"; the right of women to civil, social, and political equality; the right of the elderly to a secure old age....

—First Declaration of Havana, September 2, 1960

January 1 marks 48 years since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, when the country's working people toppled a U.S.-backed dictatorship and paved the way for a government representing the interests of workers and farmers. By late 1960, through mass mobilizations of the producers, Cuba had nationalized the country's plantations, mines, mills, factories, and banks, and opened the socialist revolution in the Americas.

The pledge to the world outlined above in the declaration millions adopted amidst those mobilizations was carried out by Cuba's working people and their leadership.

The Cuban Revolution showed that no "progressive" section of the bourgeoisie can be relied on to win and defend national sovereignty against imperialist domination or intervention. Only workers and peasants will go all the way toward a society free of capitalism's dog-eat-dog reality.

It showed that such a society can be built only by nationalizing the means of production, ending the property relations that generate economic and social discrimination.

It showed that, while the vast majority seeks to end class exploitation and national oppression peacefully, the employers use brutal violence to maintain their profits. Only a determined effort to defend what has been gained can stay the hand of imperialism. That's why, in face of imminent U.S. attack, the Cuban people declared on Sept. 2, 1960, that they would accept "with gratitude the help of rockets from the Soviet Union should our territory be invaded by the military forces of the United States."

The Cuban Revolution showed that the duty of revolutionaries is to make a revolution, not sit in their doorway "waiting for the corpse of imperialism to pass by," as the Second Declaration of Havana put it on Feb. 4, 1962.

It showed that only through a socialist revolution can working people transform themselves into new women and men imbued with selfless proletarian internationalism. This is what hundreds of thousands of Cubans volunteered to do in Angola in the 1970s and '80s, helping that country defend itself from invasion by South Africa's apartheid regime. This is what more than 20,000 Cuban doctors, agronomists, and teachers are doing today in Venezuela.

The example of the Cuban Revolution is acutely relevant today worldwide. This is true in countries such as Venezuela, where it's a more immediate question, as well as the United States, where absorbing its lessons is necessary for building a revolutionary working-class leadership.

The strength of the Cuban Revolution today, continuing to stand up to Washington's unrelenting economic war, is a good omen for the New Year.

Greetings to militants behind bars

The *Militant* extends warm New Year's greetings to our sisters and brothers in prison across the United States and internationally!

At a time when the capitalist media and politicians subject us to their seasonal "compassion" to cover up for the brutality they inflict on working people 365 days a year, it's important to remember that record numbers of workers and farmers are behind bars today. Seven million people in the United States—the world's number one prison house—are jailed, on probation, or on parole, including 2.2 million in prison. Much of this is a result of the attacks on immigrant workers and draconian drug laws that disproportionately target oppressed nationalities.

On December 12 federal immigration cops raided six Swift plants and rounded up nearly 1,300 foreign-born meat packers. Some have been deported. Hundreds remain locked up at undisclosed locations. We join with those demanding their immediate release.

Continuing a long labor tradition, the *Militant* sends a special salute to class-struggle prisoners everywhere.

Among those at the top of the honor roll are René González, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, and Ramón Labañino, Cuban revolutionaries serving long federal prison sentences on espionage and other frame-up charges. Their real "crime" was defending Cuba by reporting on ultrarightist groups that have carried out violent attacks against that nation from U.S. territory with Washington's complicity. The Cuban Five, as they are known, are carrying out political work among fellow inmates and beyond the prison walls.

Shoulder to shoulder with them are Haydeé Beltrán, Oscar López, and Carlos Alberto Torres, locked up for more than 25 years because of their involvement in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence from U.S. colonial rule, and José Pérez González, serving a five-year sentence for taking part in civil disobedience protests against the U.S. Navy occupation of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. We can celebrate the fact that in September *independentista* leader Antonio Camacho was released after spending a total of 15 years in U.S. prisons.

We also extend a hand of solidarity to others subjected to the U.S. "justice" system. These include Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement jailed for 30 years on frame-up charges of killing two FBI agents; Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed 25 years ago on charges of killing a Philadelphia cop; and Sami Al-Arian, a Tampa, Florida, supporter of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, arrested in 2003 and jailed on false "terrorism" charges.

Our Prisoner Fund makes it possible for militants behind bars to get the socialist paper at reduced rates: a six-month subscription for $6 and a one-year-sub for $12. You can help. Please write your check or money order to the *Militant*, earmarked "Prisoner Fund," and send it to the paper at 306 W. 37th Street, New York, NY 10018.

LETTERS

Police brutality

Two items about police brutality appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* November 29. The paper reports that Oakland police are being sued for $10 million by two individuals standing at a car wash after three cops fired 26 rounds "à la Hollywood action movie-style" without giving "adequate consideration to the obvious danger (posed by) their rash decision," the *Chronicle* quotes the suit as saying.

Also, the Los Angeles City Council approved a $450,000 settlement for Stanley Miller, who cops claimed was a car thief. Miller was arrested after a police pursuit and then severely beaten with a metal flashlight by officer Joe Hatfield. The Los Angeles District Attorney, however, declined to file criminal charges against Hatfield, citing lack of evidence!

Milton Chee
San Francisco, California

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

CORRECTIONS

In the editorial "Oppose 'no-match' letters!" in the December 4 issue, the omission of words changed the meaning of a sentence. The paragraph should have read, "The fight against the firing of workers because of their legal status is a union issue, and should be backed by the entire labor movement."

The photo-story "Australia protesters demand prosecution of cop responsible for death of Aborigine" in the December 18 *Militant* incorrectly identified the picture. Alec Doomadgee is not pictured in the photo, which shows part of the crowd in the protest.

N.Y. march for Bell

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Union, and Service Employees International Union locals 1199 and 32BJ. Other contingents came from Hunter College and City College, churches, and community organizations. Participants were in their overwhelming majority Black, many of them workers and young people participating in their first political protest.

Hours after the march ended, a cop shot and killed Anatoly Dmitriev, 62, a Russian immigrant, in the Bronx. Dmitriev was the second person killed by New York City police since Bell. The first, 19-year-old Timur Person, was shot five times at close range in the chest when cops wrestled him to the ground in an apartment building lobby December 13.

The police department has defended both killings, claiming that the victims were armed in each case. Dmitriev, who neighbors and relatives describe as mentally unstable, was descending a fire escape holding an ax when a cop shot him twice in the chest. Police spokesman Paul Browne called the killing "within department guidelines."

Cops recovered a .38-caliber gun on Person after killing him. They claimed Person had pulled the gun on the cops, but witnesses contradict the police account.

"At no time did he grab the gun," said Hector Suárez, a witness. "Right when he was on the floor, they shot him."

Bell, Benefield, and Guzman were unarmed when five cops opened fire on them as they left Bell's bachelor party. The cops claimed a "fourth man" present at the scene was armed. But eyewitnesses have contradicted that claim and other elements of the cops' story, as have a preliminary police report and police dispatch records from the night of the shooting.

While Queens district attorney Richard Brown has yet to set any timetable for an investigation into Bell's death, police raids on working-class neighborhoods throughout the city have continued under the guise of searching for the "fourth man."

Terry McKenzie and Gerald Williams were picked up in a raid on the housing project where they and Benefield live. "They kept asking me about shootings," McKenzie told *NY1 News*. "I didn't cooperate with them, so that's when they took me downstairs to be charged." The cops claim they found crack cocaine on McKenzie, but he insists drugs never came up during the interrogation.

"They kneed me in the stomach and then hit him in his neck," said Williams.

Like McKenzie and Williams, many at the December 16 march had their own stories of police harassment to tell. Marcher Anthony Faison, for example, served 15 years in jail for a crime of which he was later exonerated.

"If there was a fourth man he would have been shot too," said Kenisha Wakefield. "It is an excuse for a murder, to cover it up."

"It could be any Black man, my brother or my father," said marcher Kashana Ames. "Shoot first, ask questions later—that's their motto." Handmade signs featured slogans like, "It could have been me," or "NYPD: please don't kill my husband, my nephew, my son." One marcher wore a T-shirt stating, "I am Sean Bell."

Thirteen people have been killed by cops in New York City this year. Police have killed an average of 12 people a year since 2002, down from about 25 a year during the 1990s.

"They're the biggest gang in New York. You're really guilty until proven innocent," said Waliike El, a member of the American Postal Workers Union, in an interview during the march.

"I've had cops pull a gun on me three times, and the only thing I ever did wrong was run a red light," said Steven Palmore, a teacher who also works installing carpets. "There's no way I'm not going to be out here. If they locked me up I'd break out just to be here."

As this issue goes to press, another 100 people marched in Jamaica, Queens, near the site of the November 26 shooting to demand justice for Sean Bell.